

Commission on Fatherhood Issues Commission Meeting #2 – September 16, 2002

Meeting Summary

Members present: Sen. Michael J. McAlevey, Co-Chair ; Rep. Deborah L. Simpson, Co-Chair; Sen. Peggy Pendleton, Rep. Glenn Cummings, Rep. Marie Laverriere-Boucher, Emily Douglas, Ph. D.; Donald Farrell, Michael Heath and Heidi Leinonen.

Staff present: Phil McCarthy and Alison Ames.

Public present: Robert Costa, Paul Ouellette, Ed Fredericson; Tom Chandel, Craig Ladd, Laura Fortman, Maine Women's Lobby

1. Call to order. The Commission meeting was called to order at 9:20 a.m.

2. Review meeting agenda and expectations. Sen. McAlevey asked Commission members and staff to introduce themselves; and then reviewed the day's agenda.

3. Legislative history and background. Rep. Simpson introduced Rep. Tessier, sponsor of LD 472, the enabling legislation that created the study commission. A social worker, Rep. Tessier has worked since 1992 at the Maine Children's Home (founded 100 years ago and formerly known as Maine Home for Little Wanderers).

Rep. Tessier shared his legislative intent and discussed the reactions he encountered in proposing to study fatherhood issues, including the following:

- ♦ With 25 years of experience working with teenage mothers on verge of dropping out of school, found that these programs were mostly successful, but discovered that fathers were not involved in programs, so began to implement program for young fathers in 1994;
- ♦ In researching availability of programs in Maine, couldn't find much of anything available in Maine for dads; only came across a Portland YWCA program for dads, but this effort has since died out due to lack of funds; also another program in Rockland came and went;
- ♦ Learned that program approaches that work for mothers, don't necessarily work for fathers; found that he needed to employ a different approach for fathers;
- ♦ As an Army social worker, set up women's advocacy program, including rape crisis program and child care programs for military personnel;
- ♦ Fine-tuned the program approach for fathers, but after a two-year pilot program, couldn't find any interest from funding agencies (i.e., federal, state or local grants);
- ♦ LD 472 was presented as a "concept draft" to the Judiciary Committee during 1st session of 120th Legislature; Rep. Cummings supported bill and helped to flesh it out, but found a lot of opposition to the bill by women in legislative leadership, which was somewhat of a surprise;

- ♦ Despite opposition, the bill was amended in Judiciary and was ultimately carried-over to the 2nd session after being rescued from the Appropriation's Table;
- ♦ From discussions with DHS officials, has found that DHS program priorities are not always supportive of father's needs;
- ♦ Given recent Federal initiatives, believes that funds may be forthcoming and creating state initiatives would position Maine to have a crack at these resources;
- ♦ From attending a program at the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) during 2000, found that other states are way ahead of Maine . . . Georgia has a comprehensive program and funding mechanism for fatherhood programs;
- ♦ Told story of young father (20 years old with 3 kids) with low self-esteem and low job skills; receiving AFDC, but couldn't find program to refer him to. With the Woman Working Community (WWC) program appearing to be the only possible option, the participants all agreed to allow him to participate and he earned a GED, entered the Occupational Therapy program at KVTC and became employed and self-sufficient. Since then, WWC program allows men in programs on a case-by-case basis;
- ♦ Believes that there are common interests for both men and women; and sees mutual benefits for families and children by providing for common interests.

Discussion. Commission members noted the following observations in reaction to Rep. Tessier's presentation:

- ♦ To address the opposition of women's advocates -- due in part to the small funding pie for such programs – Commission needs to make a policy statement that our recommendations should not come at the expense of women and children;
- ♦ While legislators receive lots of calls from fathers having difficulty seeking and securing services, it appears that fathers aren't willing or able to ask for help;
- ♦ Perhaps there is a gender barrier or a socialization barrier that needs to be overcome;
- ♦ Despite the reality of funding concerns in the state, there are ways to reduce barriers doesn't cost money;
- ♦ Commission members would like to get a written list of barriers and the specific programs that could address them;
- ♦ Would like to hear from women's groups at a future meeting to learn of the specific concerns, particularly from the Maine Women's Lobby;
- ♦ While it's important to hear from women's advocates, it's more important to focus on eliminating barriers facing fathers;
- ♦ Would like to receive information from the NCSL session on Georgia programs and their funding sources; and invited Rep. Tessier to join the Commission as ex-officio member.

4. Factors that impact the parenting abilities of fathers. Stephen Andrew, MSW, a consultant with Inner Edge and also affiliated with the Men's Resource Center of Southern Maine (MRCSM), provided information related to programs and initiatives supporting boys, men and fathers and opposing violence, including a description of the Fathers Leadership

Involvement Project (FLIP). Mr. Andrew presented the following perspectives on cultural, institutional and societal factors that affect the development of boys, men and fathers:

- ♦ Fundamental beliefs of the MRCSM is that men must be courageous in speaking about men's and father's issues and concerns and must seek to foster a continuum of programs and services to meet these needs;
- ♦ MRCSM is primarily supported by contributions and corporate gifts;
- ♦ Programs include "Male Peace," we train peer leaders, provide support groups, where the focus is "we're all in this together and let's move along"; and Men's support groups held in churches, communities, men's circles and other settings where the focus is on men helping men and boys helping boys; our response is to train facilitators, do screening, provide support and then allow men to move on to a support circle;
- ♦ Collaborated with the Portland Partnership to launch the FLIP initiative in 2000-2001, which sought to reduce self-destructive behaviors (i.e., violence and substance abuse) in our children and to improve educational aspirations and performance through the training and development of a small cadre of fathers and adult men who can overcome cultural and institutional barriers by engaging our children in schools and the community;
- ♦ The involvement of a caring father in the academic life of their child has been shown to be an important factor the child's academic performance and susceptibility to self-destructive behaviors;
- ♦ Women predominantly fill the ranks of elementary school educational staff and volunteers (95%) and when men are involved in school, they tend to be volunteering in sports or recess areas;
- ♦ While school policy requires visitors to sign-in, when a man and woman enter a school together, school personnel tend to stop and check-in the man, but not the woman since there is a presumption that all men may be violent and dangerous;
- ♦ We need more fathers genuinely involved in schools, childcare centers, etc. and more personnel in our schools and childcare centers attuned to welcoming, encouraging and supporting the involvement of fathers and men;
- ♦ We tend to focus on the "worst-case scenario" and base our reactions on that scenario rather than figuring out how to help men who are struggling;
- ♦ For example, initiatives such as "batterers intervention project" have miserable outcome measures since they just label the batterers as "bad people" and therefore develop an immediate resistance to the intervention; we need to take into account socialization processes, cultural messages and the impact they have on teaching boys what to expect, how to feel and how to act in the world;
- ♦ Described the "gauntlet of cruelty" wherein boys experience messages from the culture between the ages of 10 and 15; and if they don't pay attention, they are picked on, taunted, bullied, and harassed; boys (both the victim and those witnessing) learn rules from this experience . . . be tough, be isolated, don't connect, don't show love to other men, distance yourself and depend on yourself; these learnings make it difficult for boys to connect with other boys and later, for men to connect with other men;
- ♦ Societal barriers and cultural messages also make it harder for men to connect with their children;
- ♦ Wonderful resources -- such as Raising Caine: Protecting the Emotional Life of Boys -- suggest that what boys need includes: permission to have a full range of human emotions,

models of emotional attachment and to be taught the many ways that emotional courage and empathy are sources of masculine strength for life;

Handouts. Mr. Andrew provided the following materials to the Commission:

- ♦ What is the Men's Resource Center of Southern Maine?
- ♦ Exploring the Relationship Between Fathers and Children
- ♦ The Nurturing Father's Program: Overview
- ♦ Fathers Leadership Involvement Project (FLIP): Project Description
- ♦ Angry Boys

Discussion. Commission members and Mr. Andrews offered the following observations in reaction to Mr. Andrew's presentation:

- ♦ The same fundamental beliefs that hold men back also account for women's fear of becoming victims of violence and may account for a predisposition that men may be violent; still, while statistics indicate men are most often the perpetrators of violence, women shouldn't necessarily assume all men are violent (most often, strangers are not perpetrators of violence); we all need to work on changing fundamental beliefs;
- ♦ We need to set up programs for men and boys to be involved in violence prevention; in your parking lot scenario, think about lack of fear boys have and why is it that a man would walk into a situation and not be afraid; we toughen up through competition in a number of realms and lose a sense of fear and emotional states and don't develop emotional intelligence;
- ♦ Socialization of boys in schools is often problem-focused -- assault, substance abuse and we need to figure out how to incorporate emotional intelligence in schools, particularly at the middle school level; need to have men and older boys lending a hand to help out younger boys;
- ♦ Need to step back beyond focus on violence prevention, socialization is a preliminary developmental step in understanding and managing emotions . . . "e-motion" = energy in motion and -- if not understood or managed -- may lead to aggressive, abusive or violent action;
- ♦ As long as you focus on the problem, the more you keep the focus on the problem; we need more focus on *creating* non-violent men, not violence-prevention;
- ♦ We need to balance the legitimate concerns of women with men's needs; unhappy dads = unhappy children;
- ♦ Disagree with the premise that men hold all the power, men do not hold emotional power; emotion is a connector and it's what makes relationships work between people, while men may control 92% of GNP in world, without connections we'll die sooner, end up in prison and kill each other; we need each other and a full dialogue of men's loss of emotional power.

5. Programs supporting families of separation and divorce. Staci Fortunato, Executive Director, Families First of Kennebec County, presented information on the programs provided by Families First for parents and families of separation and divorce.

- ♦ Families First is designated as the Kennebec County child prevention and abuse council and provides education, advocacy and family support;

- ♦ Kids First program, a 3-hour class developed by the Kids First Center, is available to any parent or guardian considering or in a separation or divorce; the program is offered 2-3 times monthly;
- ♦ Offered in three locations; co-facilitated by an attorney and a therapist; video clips, role playing, interaction and discussion, etc.; preclude personal problems; resource materials available
- ♦ Fee-based program, but financial aid is offered; also receive funding through the Division of Courts; while parents are strongly encouraged to participate, courts may also mandate participation;
- ♦ DHS not involved in the program, but we are seeking more recognition and involvement from the department;
- ♦ Boot Camp for New Dads was initially developed for dads in the military; “vete provide role modeling, discuss caring for babies and moms, child abuse prevention, shaken baby syndrome and budgeting issues;
- ♦ Also provide “steps” program and “parent circle” programs;
- ♦ Hope that Families First will have the means to expand these programs

Handouts. Ms. Fortunato provided the following materials to the Commission:

- ♦ National Fatherhood Initiative (NFI) website materials – What it Takes to Be a Father vs. What it Takes to Be a Dad;
- ♦ NFI Father Facts – Top 10 father facts;
- ♦ Father Love and Fragile Families findings (David Blankenhorn) -- 90% of fathers are present at birth, but only 50% remain in the home;
- ♦ Boot Camps for Dads – veteran dads model behavior for rookie dads
- ♦ “It’s a Guy Thing” program flyer

Discussion. Commission members and Ms. Fortunato discussed the following aspects of Ms. Fortunato’s presentation:

- ♦ The only program evaluation information available is mainly responses in the form of participant satisfaction survey;
- ♦ Participants indicate they learn a lot in the program, but we need to do a better job at follow-up; more classes are requested for families in high conflict;
- ♦ While there may be a lapse in federal funds, the agency seems to be in a good cycle.

6. Federal and state programs supporting father’s involvement in their children’s lives. Panel of DHS staff provided a briefing on the following programs:

State plan for TANF funds, including programs and services for fathers. Judy Williams, Bureau of Family Independence, provided the following information:

- ♦ Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) was enacted in 1996 as a block grant for variety of programs; no longer requires a state match, but state must maintain effort;
- ♦ Goals: (1) work; (2) needs of families with young children; (3) family formation and (4) out-of-wedlock birth and teen pregnancy prevention;

- ♦ Maine uses TANF funds for financial assistance to families, the ASPIRE program for employment, training and education, including child care and transportation; and for social services block grant activities and child care development funds;
 - ♦ Feds are reauthorizing TANF this year and we do not yet know where the House and Senate versions will end up;
 - ♦ TANF is a cash programs to meet basic needs of families; provide support for those children's families who are eligible under "deprivation" -- death, divorce, separation, disability, unemployment or underemployment;
 - ♦ 11,100 households; 2,200 child-only; 1,100 based on a disabled parent (principle wage earner "male" disabled for at least 30 days); 600 cases where parent is unemployed or underemployed ("male" working less than 100 hours per month); 335 cases where male is the head of household;
 - ♦ Parents as Scholars program – has same eligibility as TANF; focus is to attain a 2-year or 4-year postsecondary education degree;
 - ♦ Assistance to ASPIRE – provides educational training and skills for employment market; job counseling, interview skills, etc.; medical support through Maine Care (formerly Cub Care), food stamps, childcare and transportation available if needed to assist person to meet the goals;
 - ♦ Goal for both TANF and ASPIRE is to transition to self-sufficiency.
- ASPIRE is the educational program for TANF recipients; and when the custodial parent is a TANF recipient, they must take training programs and transition to work

Discussion. Commission members and Ms. Williams discussed the following aspects of her presentation:

- ♦ The presence of institutional or legal barriers for individuals seeking TANF; some states have removed threshold barriers (e.g., work requirement of 100 hours)
- ♦ Anticipation of additional funds for TANF programs; won't know until TANF reauthorization later this year or next year;
- ♦ The perceptions or appearance of gender bias within DHS may stem – in part – from the context of allegations where your staff never have news that people want to hear; I know in domestic violence prevention we're in similar situation, where low-income women feel we may be discriminatory; we need to need to dispel myths and work on combating those assumptions to support children and families.

Non-Custodial Parent Outreach and Investigation Project. Stephen Hussey, Division of Support Enforcement & Recovery, provided the following information:

- ♦ 91% of caseload of non-custodial parents are female, but we also have a significant male population that we serve;
- ♦ Federal grant in conjunction with DHS training institute, courts, AG – project looking into the factors that affect a person's ability to pay child support; project looked at 22% - 25% of our cases; 2 investigators from Portland AGO met with cases;
- ♦ One focus is on "default paternity cases" where a person never answered a request for acknowledgement and paternity testing, or for a court proceeding;
- ♦ Pleased with the results, have investigated 100 referred cases and either worked out an agreement or resolved the default;

- ♦ Developed Resource Guide for Knox, York and Penobscot Counties . . . finding lack of education and job skills, medical problems, substance abuse; guide can assist cases get access to resources and services;
- ♦ Grant ends in June, 2003; if final evaluation warrants, hope we can sustain or secure funding to continue program;
- ♦ Transitional employment program – initiative with City of Portland where we attempt to refer non-custodial parents with Bureau of Human Resources in Portland; currently placed 43 eligibility placement forms; 11 contracts currently in place.

Handouts. Mr. Hussey provided the following materials to the Commission:

- ♦ Division of Support Enforcement – Caseloads and Collections under Welfare Reform;
- ♦ Division of Support Enforcement – Links to the DHS website for the Child Support Manual;
- ♦ Transitional Employment Project – Initiative with City of Portland;
- ♦ Non-Custodial Parent Outreach and Investigation Project – 10/1-8/02 report.

Discussion. Commission members and Mr. Hussey discussed the following aspects of Mr. Hussey's presentation:

- ♦ DHS can't reimburse a man who had paid child support until a DNA test proved he wasn't the child's father; only the court can change a child support order;
- ♦ When parents involve DHS in child support case; parents can opt out of DHS involvement by agreeing to court order; parents opt-in for DHS involvement to secure the benefits of payroll deduction;
- ♦ Complaints regarding the threatening tone of DHS communication and an apparent presumption of guilt; after paternity is established, DHS is required to present a notice to the father of the legal consequences; will provide copy of the notice used for child support enforcement cases;
- ♦ DHS obligation to inform the court when a mother falsely names a man as the father in a child support enforcement process; DHS encourages everybody to get involved in process and provides free paternity testing if father agrees to participate in the process;
- ♦ Determination of the amount required to be paid for child support; DHS or court order determines amount depending on whether paternity is established or responsibility is adjudicated in court;
- ♦ An income change or a change of circumstance may trigger a review, an individual must still file with court or the individual may contact DHS to notify of the change in circumstances and then go before the court's case management officer for the review; a lawyer is not required, the family division of the district court is set up to work with family case manager officers; if an administrative order from DHS determined child support, then the individual would file with us;
- ♦ Colorado program to provide assistance and support for incarcerated population;
- ♦ Is the focus of non-custodial outreach program also to provide outreach or just focus on collection; focus is on why 22%-25% of our case population is not responsive; if we need to provide assistance to enable non-custodial parent to make child support payment, we'll connect them with the resources to get then the help.

Access and visitation programs. Stephen Hussey, Division of Support Enforcement & Recovery, provided the following information:

- ♦ Access & visitation grant project – Maine received \$50,000 in 1997 and 1998; due to size of caseload, we received minimal caseload; since then, \$100,000 annually for supervised visitation programs;
- ♦ Funds also support parenting programs in Portland and Augusta areas, providing assistance to parents involved in separation or divorce process; programs expanded to 15 sites in virtually every geographic region across state ; more fathers have attended these programs and we have received good feedback from fathers;
- ♦ Parenting education classes; neutral drop-off and pick up sites; supervised visitation services; looking to expand to more rural and less populated areas.

Handouts. Mr. Hussey provided the following materials to the Commission:

- ♦ Notes on Access & Visitation grant project: June, 2002 report;
- ♦ National Governor's Association Center for Best Practices – Promoting Responsible Fatherhood: An Update.

Discussion. Commission members and Mr. Hussey discussed the following aspects of Mr. Hussey's presentation:

- ♦ Eligibility for supervised visitation; concern that safety for child also be expanded to safety for all involved;
- ♦ There is a tremendous need for supervised visitation and hope to include two neutral drop-off and pick-up sites, and a home-to-home option in our funding request next year; also want to expand services to other counties across the State;
- ♦ Supervised visitation for reunification; funds are available for recruitment and training for open cases;
- ♦ DHS funding support divorce education via Kids First programs; DHS hopes that curricula and programs would expand and grow in private, non-profit sector.

Foster and adoptive programs. Michael Norton, Bureau of Child & Family Services, provided the following information:

- ♦ Adoptive and foster parent programs -- 24-hour training program through CWTI and child welfare placement agencies; offered on Saturdays, free child care is provided;
- ♦ Therapeutic programs require 42 hours of training and 40 hours annually to maintain a license;
- ♦ Training materials are available through catalogues and are expanding to on-line resources;
- ♦ Interviewing and application process is now gender-neutral to correct presumption of female adoptive and foster parent.

Handouts. Mr. Norton provided the following materials to the Commission:

- ♦ Foster and Adoptive Parenting: For you and ME.

Discussion. Commission members and Mr. Norton discussed the following aspects of Mr. Norton's presentation:

- ♦ Whether male and female applicants for foster care are still registered in the woman's; -neutral in the letter of our policy, but still need to work on training our people;
- ♦ Obstacles we as a State need to work on to promote father's involvement and best practices; providing an environment where the family can interact and build a healthy relationship; goes beyond marriage promotion and includes family formation;
- ♦ Evolution of marriage promotion goal to family formation; family court advisory committee looking at accessibility concerns and attempts to increase access; also need education for fathers to develop skills in establishing and enhancing relationship with their children; also see prospects in non-custodial outreach program;
- ♦ Perceptions and first-hand, second-hand cases of institutional bias against fathers; what mechanisms do you have to identify these biases and – if it exists – how do you work to improve them; DHS in last 5 years has tried diligently to treat all people with respect; if we see personnel issues, we work on the matter and take action -- even though we cannot disclose publicly to the interested party what action we have taken; we attempt to deal with people in a respectful manner, even when we are publicly subjected to disrespectful behavior;
- ♦ The need for an ombudsman for fathers or parents;
- ♦ DHS will keep focusing our work in enabling healthy family formation and to train and support our people to continue to do good work.
- ♦ In reconciling the TANF discussions on marriage promotion and family formation, how do we respond to Wade Horn's quote "the future of fatherhood is inextricably tied to marriage . . . there is evidence that marriage leads to committed, involved fatherhood"; administration has more recently shifted its focus to healthy family formation; House version talks about extra grant funds for family-formation.

Head Start programs. Kerry Wiersma, Division of Contracted Community Services, and Lisa Ayotte, Augusta Head Start Program and Chris Rolace, Coastal Economic Development, Bath, provided the following information:

- ♦ Serve 4,000 in Head Start programs; \$3.5m in state funds;
- ♦ Fatherhood initiatives since 1997, \$2,000 federal grant per agency for Good Guys initiative, which focuses on literacy activities, parenting skills;
- ♦ \$10,000 - \$20,000 grants to county agency;
- ♦ Also provider for domestic violence contract;
- ♦ Bath serves 261 children through 9 centers in a 6-10 week program; shifted focus to short-term, focused projects with tangible results (e.g., playground maintenance and repair) and found fair amount of participation; Read with ME – in conjunction with Literacy Volunteers and takes place at Head Start program and at home; provide classroom modeling and send books home with fathers and children;

- ♦ Soon will be able to provide quantifiable program evaluation information; plan weekend and evening events such as fall harvest, winter carnival and craft projects;
- ♦ Augusta Head Start serves 400 children and provides significant child care; started out in 1996-97 to heighten staff awareness and hired LSW and trained men to facilitators; perennial start-up and we now focus on parent orientations and first parent meetings to involve fathers;
- ♦ Work with DHS to provide training for parents and friendlier relationships and parent education (via ASPIRE);
- ♦ For 3 years, we have utilized Arboretum to provide family fairs and Maine BASS fisherman in conjunction with “hooked on fishing, not on drugs” program; \$15,000 award for fatherhood initiatives this year.

Discussion. Commission members and Ms. Wiersma, Ms. Ayotte and Mr. Rolace discussed the following aspects of the Head Start presentation:

- ♦ Would like to see written learnings of your transition to father involvement and best practices;
- ♦ Encourage you as spokespeople for DHS to change tone of communication and substance of your contacts with fathers as we need to include fathers as part of the community for whom we have high expectations;
- ♦ Men testifying against this bill indicated DHS programs only serve women and not men, your presentation today seemed to indicate gender balance and equity.

7. Public Comment.

Robert G. Costa, father

- ♦ Despite a protection from abuse (PFA) order, schools and teachers welcome me and find me to be a good dad; have custody every other weekend and every other Thursday;
- ♦ According to BDN and my research in Washington County, 95% of children are placed in custody of mothers;
- ♦ We’re told not to worry about our children since they are resilient;
- ♦ We need to have judges put parents together to work out custody arrangements and provide assistance if they need it;
- ♦ Custody arrangements aren’t made until child is 12 years old . . . why, 15 might be better;
- ♦ Judge ordered me to make my son obey court order to remain in situation with no running water;
- ♦ Discrimination in any form (i.e., against women and Blacks) is bad for society; and against boys and men is also wrong and must be ended.

Richard Sicora, Deer Isle dad (former head of Maine Dads with Robert Botham)

- ♦ Abuse of protection from abuse (PFA) order is still problematic; problematic that parents can’t work together in best interests of children;
- ♦ Good dads need to be spending time with their children;
- ♦ Courts need to be more responsive and should expedite proceedings; need to cut through the fog and get to resolving the problems;

- ♦ Voluntarily entered into anger management program; need to find a way to have parents get together;
- ♦ Child in foster care for 18 months and dealt with DHS, who were unfair; we need to resuscitate ombudsmen program; DHS has absolute power and absolute power corrupts;
- ♦ Need to redistribute funds to provide services to fathers as well as mothers.

Ed Fredericson, dad for 13 and 16 year old daughters

- ♦ Segment of dads falling through the cracks; those that support their children morally;
- ♦ Two approaches to this problem; need to educate boys is also a cost-effective solution: (1) PFAs are alienating fathers and exacerbating situation; it's martial law and unfair to fathers; PFAs are all about control and if you are served, you're at a distinct disadvantage from there on out; and (2) need accountability in PFAs . . . since moral and emotional abuse visited upon father is every bit as damaging as physical abuse;
- ♦ How can a father set a good example for their children when they only have their children for 30% of the time? Shouldn't each parent have 50% of their time unless they otherwise prove to be unfit to meet those responsibilities?
- ♦ Wasting resources to file for guardian ad litem doesn't help anyone;
- ♦ Court system based on 1950 society; now in new millennium, families have changed and judicial system needs to change;
- ♦ Divorce baggage also affects new families that follow;
- ♦ Why is it that fathers don't automatically have 50% of shared time.

Joe Walker, divorced dad in January, 2000 have 13 year old and 16 year old

- ♦ Have 50% custody of my children and take good care of them;
- ♦ Lost job and filed motion in December, 2001 and court for change in circumstances, still haven't had court order to change child support
- ♦ Still make child support payments even though I earn less than half of what I used to make;
- ♦ Provided threatening letter from DHS informing him of the hearing.

Tom Chandel

- ♦ Law says school administrative units "may" provide records to non-custodial parent ; change to "must";
- ♦ Assess amounts fairly, look at visitation time and other factors;
- ♦ Modifications may be appealed to DHS; but only 50% of the time do modifications get made;
- ♦ "Presumption of joint custody" – when in disagreement, shared parenting should be the presumption;
- ♦ Child support and enforcement – DHS focuses efforts on fathers with money;
- ♦ Tax laws will be addressed at federal level – going in different direction; state tax on Federal AGI.

Laura Fortman, Maine Women's Lobby

- ♦ In response to earlier comments, I am here to respond to charge that Maine Women's Lobby presented testimony public on the bill; we didn't testify;
- ♦ Steve Andrews presentation reminded me of where women were 30 years ago.

8. Adjourn meeting. The Commission meeting was adjourned at 3:55 p.m.

Prepared and respectfully submitted by:

Phil McCarthy,
Legislative Analyst
Office of Policy & Legal Analysis